

GOD MAKETH THE WRATH OF MAN TO PRAISE HIM.

Oftentimes a teacher will present to his class some truth in physics, and find that his pupils fail to grasp it. Then he picks up some concrete illustration of the truth, and exhibits it; and at once they grasp it readily.

In spiritual teaching, the same is true. The preacher of the Gospel sets forth the holiness of God, his wisdom and his love, and we assent. And yet our conception of these things is vague. The concrete instance is what we need. In his love God often gives us the practical illustration.

We all know that God causeth the wrath of man to praise him. But let us take up some of the facts of history and see if we can not appreciate this truth a little more deeply.

In the days of Jacob, God wanted a place of refuge for his family where they might live and grow in number till they should be strong enough to maintain a national existence. As the place he selected Goshen in Egypt: a land whose people were so different in racial character as to eliminate the temptation to social intermingling or amalgamation. Because of these and other perils, Canaan was not such a place: but Goshen was.

The jealousy of the brothers of Joseph was sinful: their act in selling him as a slave was inexcusable. It was the wrath of man. But (1) it sent Joseph into Egypt; (2) it sent him into the house of one of the chief officers of that country; and (3) it gave the opportunity of showing to the butler who stood near to the throne the probity of his character.

The wife of Potiphar accused Joseph falsely and secured his imprisonment, apparently for life. It was the wrath of man. But it brought Joseph into contact with the chief butler, it led him up to the interpreting of the butler's dream: then it brought him to the notice of Pharaoh, and then it made him viceroy of the realm. As such he provided a home in the land of Goshen for all his family, under the protection of Egypt and yet segregated from their idolatries.

If Joseph had been allowed to remain under his father's roof in Canaan, none of this would have transpired. It was the wrath of man that made him viceroy of Egypt and the protector of his family.

The life of Daniel furnishes another illustration. It is but a few weeks since we noticed the wrath of man in casting Daniel to the lions. But this outrage was the instrumentality of making Cyrus issue the decree to rebuild the temple.

Not less conspicuous is the life of Paul. His enemies, in their wrath, plotted his death and secured his imprisonment for four years. They thought they had succeeded in stopping the mouth of the Apostle. But God made it to praise him. On the shipwrecked vessel, God's love was manifested in the salvation of every one on board. At Rome, if Paul had entered the city as an apostle of Jesus, he would have received little attention from the proud people and none at all (unless it were persecution) from the officials. But because he came there as a prisoner the judges and the Emperor were obligated to examine the accusation. And in the first chapter of Philippians Paul says that his "bonds in Christ were manifest in all the palace." And in the last chapter Paul sends salutations to the

Philippians from "them that are of Caesar's household." Indeed at the present day there are inscriptions in the Catacombs of Rome showing that members of the Emperor's family lived and died as Christians.

Oftentimes when we find ourselves suffering the wrath of man we are discouraged and grieved. But God has put this text into the Psalms for our comfort and has given us these illustrations for our cheer.

FROM WHOM DOES GOD ELECT?

If the governor of a State should take a list of honest citizens, who have ever lived honorable lives, and proceed to elect from among them some to enjoy liberty, and some to suffer penalties, the world would cry out with indignation. The stamp of injustice would rest upon the proceeding.

But if that same governor should take a trip to the penitentiary and should be pleased to extend a pardon to some of its inmates, especially if he should see his way clear to pardon nine-tenths of them (without doing an injury to the public), we would praise him. And if he left in the penitentiary a considerable number of men who had been convicted of gross crime, by no means could we blame him.

If the governor should choose to give his reasons for pardoning one and refusing pardon to another, we would find pleasure. But if he should fail or refuse to give any reason for not pardoning certain prisoners, no man could find fault. The reason for the man's conviction was given at the trial; the governor would not do wisely to add anything further.

To these propositions every man will assent. Now let us transfer the case from an earthly to a spiritual sphere.

Some, men, when they read in Scripture of God's electing love, begin to find fault. They do not pause to learn the character of the persons from whom God makes his election. They start with an assumption which is false, that God in his work of election is dealing with sinless men. And proceeding on this erroneous basis, they accuse God of unfairness.

But the fact is that in his election of men on earth God is dealing not with holy men, but with condemned criminals. The moment that a man sins, he comes under condemnation. "He that believeth not is condemned already." Except as they have claimed the pardon that God offers, the whole race of man is a gathering of condemned criminals awaiting the day of execution.

Into this gathering of the condemned comes the gracious King Jehovah. Love stirs him to action. He takes in hand the Lamb's book of Life and he writes in it the name of the one of these prisoners, and then of another, and of others and others till (as the Book of Revelation tells us) they are a great multitude whom no man could number. To each of these he gives a full and complete pardon. He sets them free from condemnation, and adopts them as his own children. This is God's election.

We do not find fault with the governor of the State for electing criminals to pardon them out of the penitentiary. Why should any man find fault with God for electing men who are under condemnation to pardon them out of hell?